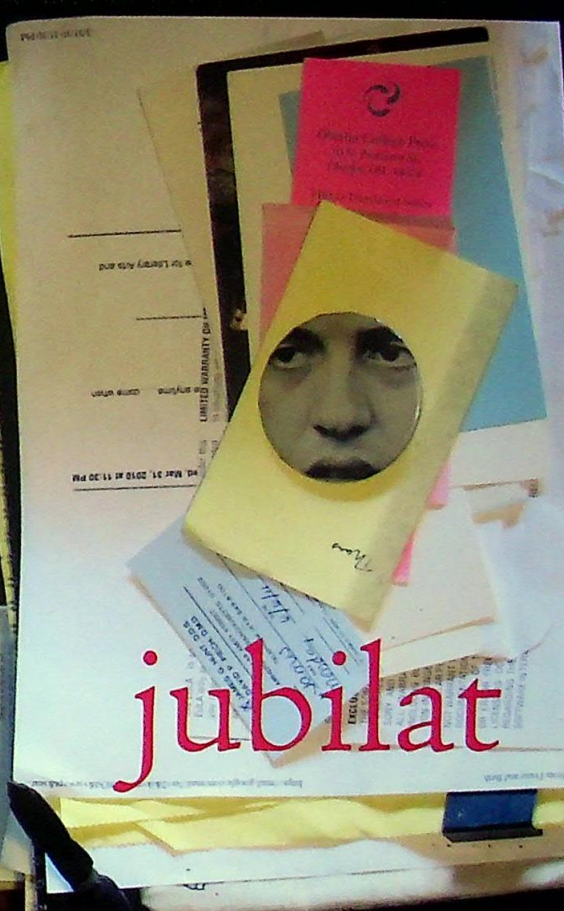
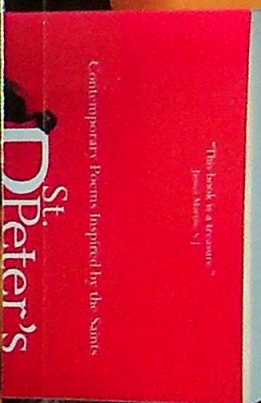


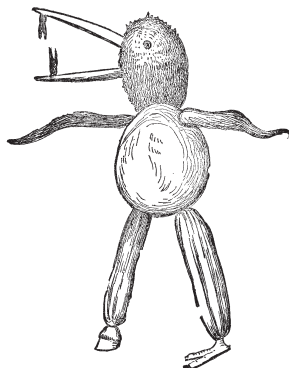


jubilat



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twenty nine



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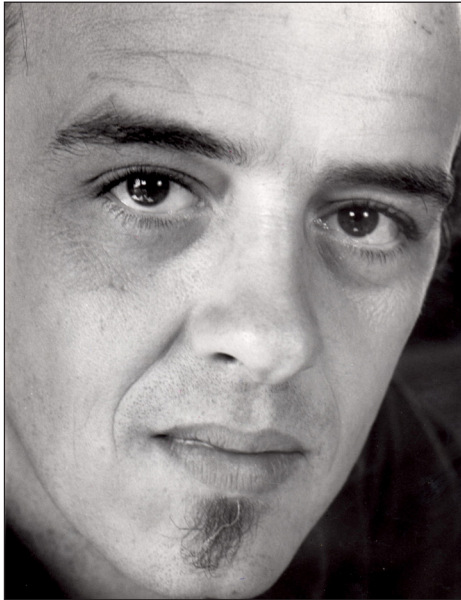
CONTENTS

- 6 *Besides, Little Goat, You Can't Just Go Asking for Mercy*
KAVEH AKBAR
- 7 *Foley*
CIARAN BERRY
- 10 *Babylon*
ANNE BOYER
- 13 *Four Poems*
ANA BOŽIČEVIĆ
- 17 *from A Pillow Book*
SUZANNE BUFFAM
- 28 *from The Yesterday Project*
BEN AND SANDRA DOLLER
- 34 *Relapsing/Remitting*
CAROLINA EBEID
- 35 *Two Poems*
NATALIE EILBERT
- 39 *Frontier*
BRIAN FOLEY
- 41 *from Glacier National Park*
LEORA FRIDMAN
- 45 *Among Norwegians*
JAMES HAUG
- 70 *In Defense of Violent Protest or To Those Who Would Shame
Them for Rioting or A Poem for Black Mothers*
BRIONNE JANAE
- 72 *Lupines*
HANAE JONAS
- 74 *Two Poems*
JENNIFER L. KNOX

- 76 *All the Signposts Were Torn from the Concrete*
CHRIS MARTIN & MARY AUSTIN SPEAKER
- 85 *Five Poems*
LO KWA MEI-EN
- 91 *from Insomnia*
KATIE MERTZ
- 93 *Flood Language*
DAVID JAMES MILLER
- 97 *Three Poems*
CATE PEEBLES
- 102 *Two Poems*
CAMILLE RANKINE
- 105 *jubilat Interview*
CAMILLE RANKINE
- 121 *Dear Katie*
EMILY SKAJA
- 123 *jubilat Portfolio: JAMES TATE*
Three Poems by James Tate
Photographs by Michael Medeiros
- 146 *Two Poems*
MARCUS WICKER
- 149 *Genesis*
NAIMA WOODS
- 151 *Three Poems*
MONICA YOUN

Cover Photographs: HAN SHAN

IN MEMORIAM



Photograph by unidentified photographer

JAMES TATE
1943-2015

BESIDES, LITTLE GOAT, YOU CAN'T JUST GO ASKING FOR MERCY

Kaveh Akbar

Besides, little goat, you can't just go asking for mercy.
With a body like that, it's easy to forget

about the spirit—the sun unfolding over your coat, your throat
too elegant for prayer. I like it fine, this daily struggle

to not die, to not drink or smoke or snort anything
that might return me to combustibility. Historical problem:

it's harder than you'd think to burn even what's flammable.
Once, I charged into your body and invented breath. Or,

I stumbled into your mouth and found you breathing. When I left,
I left a lozenge of molten ore on your tongue. Stony grain-pounder,

sleepy pattern-locator, do this: cover your wings, trust
the earth, spread your genes. Nothing here is owned. The ladder

you're looking for starts not on the ground but several feet below it.

FOLEY

Ciaran Berry

A horse was two cups tapped
 against a tabletop. A closed fist
 hitting bone was a closed fist
hitting bone. Now the foley
 of the past's awake again, and hard
 at his mimetic work.

Not water diviner so much
 as white-faced mime plunging
 a hand into the lucky bag
of time, he conjures, from a fistful
 of cellophane, a scrim of rain;
 insect wings from a scrap

of sticky tape, a pocket fan.
 Your doppelganger on the sound stage,
 your better-looking twin, he tracks
your silent steps across the screen,
 where you're Guido led back blind
 towards who he's been,

or Daffy Duck breaking down
 the fourth wall to complain. Out of
 the clutter of typewriters, rotary
phones, a snorkeler's mask, a pair
 of wellingtons, he stirs sense
 of your every twist

and turn, wearing your boots to tread
the boards, rubbing your winter coat
against a microphone. He sets
a red foil fish onto your palm
to tell your future by the heat
beneath your skin,

and offers you the hardboiled sweets
of the bygone that melt to soap
and sugar on the tongue. The past
is bric-a-brac and second hand,
a thrift store suit, a vagrant troupe
of clowns, one on the tuba,

one on the clarinet. The past
is kitsch standup, an irate duck
railing against the mute maker
who keeps setting him up. In one scene
you're that feted musketeer,
swinging a sword

at barns and grain silos. In another
you schlep through snow in a straw hat,
a pair of dungarees, a mattock
slung over your right shoulder.
And it's never far enough away,
is it, your erasure,

the pencil's pink rubber turned towards
your feathered form? While the foley,
all feet and hands amidst his props,
sets and resets the metronome to mimic
your meander, drops wet paper to
make a sound like sick.

BABYLON

Anne Boyer

The first night in Babylon I read the shapes of starlets: everything around them glittered in the softly lit. Babylon had an air of hyper-conspired unreality as if even its deformities were formed by committee. Its onslaught was mostly of hubris and design flaws. Babylon's citizens upped their exterior gleam to show to an advantage the calculated city-like-city's grim.

Then I saw the starlet on the street. This starlet was tiny and warm and arm in arm with a tiny man and the two were saying "This is Babylon! Reach for the stars!" They attempted to grab the stars from the heavens, but their arms were too short.

I had been, before that, in a restaurant at a table next to a table with a starlet, this one of medium size, and my arm brushed against the arm of a third starlet (a larger one) after that. In the starlet-filled Babylon the future I had been writing about was finally aligning, how also there was no feeling of my own agency but in its place some totally celestial machine composed mostly of plot points and the lambent uncaring of logics too sparkly to historicize.

No one needed sensory detail about the city-like-city of Babylon, the fact of location existing sufficiently for itself. But I was a simple person, forever impressed, and the city wooed with alluring opposites, magnetized to profit, was made of jeweled things set in a circulatory blur.

Babylon's people were a collection of competitively gleaming things among the competitive din. I was often wrong even at just being, and my eyes in Babylon couldn't see the necessary for decision, seeing only an indistinguishable background of a city-like-rumor and on the foreground

every kind of charming inaccident and event which no one should believe.
The city was like an art exhibit consisting only of a sign that read

EVERY ABOMINATION
FOR RENT
ON THE EARTH

Soon I found a companion with whom to roam the streets of Babylon. Unconvinced by Babylon's astral-convincing, he was a serious person whose mind stayed on circulation, soil, and a-heroic science fiction. He was a docent through the motion of decision of a city I could never become.

That night, when I finally fell asleep, I dreamed that the tiny starlet had made a map of varicose veins in her legs and during this dream the tour guide continued his softly intelligent lecture, the one he had made earlier from the streets, escorting me through the problem of vascular geography, as if he could heal the brutal maps and suture up the un-suturable facts.

The second night in Babylon I was no more clear-eyed or decisive. I was captivated and bad at it and at last doing nothing that was charming among the diamond and charming beings and was neither a handsome man or one of the necessary illuminations. This failure was tightly plotted, like a bookstore on a conveyor belt.

I saw a fourth starlet: she was sticking her fingers in her pupils, over and over, to find contacts that weren't actually there. This was "to gag thine own eyes in the deceiving city," as the scriptures say, and a fifth starlet said that to live in Babylon is to wade through a pond as an exposed wire.

I barely slept again for the fact of Babylon and the backlit silvery movers in it, the halogen and purging totality, the lurid possibility of an incandescent civic pornography, all of it recirculating into the half-awakeness of economies and euclidian groins. This was like a sex addiction: the starlets felt pink and flexible and like flickering screens that would never grow dim. I wanted to kiss almost anyone. Then it was a requirement, I guess, to escape from the nights of Babylon, and so I did.



Ana Božičević

Tonight I am reborn
As Happy Ghost
You can contact me
Via Ouija, baby
I'm the Weege
Of passion crimes committed
Solely in the mountains of
Mind
Where streams flow
Whose water
Marbles like flesh and where
Werewhos prey . . .
Rise into the tree crowns,
Star of day
Be the monster whose each step
Makes wood blooms
Forever verb.

YOU ARE AN EPITOME OF BEAUTY

I thought of a marvelous

Trick:

If you're reading this

And having negative

Thoughts imagine

Now those thoughts

Exiting through

Your shoulder blades—

As soon as they hit the air

They're seahorses

Behind your back they're

Building an air school to

Hash it all out. Now

Picture the seahorses

Coming to show you

The results of

Their long studies

They say we are too pretty

To be sad

And the deep

Inside you though dark

Is full of

Electric coral—

We only got negative

Because we couldn't

Be seen but now

We can see our beauty

Now we're educated

Let us teach you!

Then they show you joy.

BUFFALO

Perfect girls singing
In liberated silos

The industrial revolution didn't
Save us nor will the digital

Is what I'm thinking as I see
On the one basic

Inner channel
Us walking high and happy in the snow

Of this immemorial year
I loved you and still do

What do you think, who will be
The last to text before

One of us dies
I get that you didn't want to wake up

Each morning to a mental goddess
But I really did trust

You n I would make it
I'll be so mad

If love turns out not to be a person

LATERZ

You got me where
You want me
A shiny memory a curse
To pray to, whatever
I'm immaterial
So I sleep many hours, pull up
In a fly hearse to
The House of Death
A tall black square I'm 'sposed
To tremble before, I take a pic
And put it on Instagram
Outside, the porch
Runs into the shallows
Where a preacher melts into
The surf, reborn
As a foam idea
And inside
Trees make their own wild
Arrangements in the
Dining room nook
I hide in the bathroom
To masturbate
When I come out it's summer
Our kid is playing
On the veranda
Whole house is white
If this is the other world
I'm ready

from A PILLOW BOOK

Suzanne Buffam

Among the oldest living pillows in the world today is a smooth block of unpainted wood with a wide crack running through its middle and a shallow indentation on the top. It was found in the tomb of an Egyptian mummy in the Fourth Dynastic town of Gebelein, on the banks of the Nile River. If you came across it in a field, you might assume it had just fallen from a cart. If you found it by the sea, you might suppose it had been knocked loose from a sailboat in a storm. You might kick it, or pick it up and toss it like a bottle off the dock.

*

F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote lists. Abraham Lincoln took midnight walks. Tallulah Bankhead paid a series of young caddies to hold her hand in the dark, as did Marcel Proust. Thomas Edison invented the light bulb so he could read after dark. I put a piece of paper under my pillow at night, and when I could not sleep, I wrote in the dark, wrote Henry David Thoreau, who once spent a fortnight in a roofless cabin with his head on a pillow of bricks.

*

There are two kinds of insomniacs: those who fall asleep easily, only to wake up hours later to toss on their pillows until dawn, and those who toss on their pillows from the start, only to drift off just long enough to

be roused at dawn by the crows. A little game I like to play, when I crawl into bed at the end of a long day of anything, these days, is to guess which kind, tonight, I will be.

*

BOOKS I'D LIKE TO READ SOMEDAY

I and It, by Martin Buber.

Queen Lear, by William Shakespeare.

Moby Dick, by Gertrude Stein.

End Game, by Dr. Seuss.

Complete Poems, by Sappho.

The Interpretation of Dreams, by Jorge Luis Borges.

Kafka for Dummies, by Franz Kafka.

My Mistake, by Laura Bush.

What Would Jesus Do?, by Jesus Christ.

*

Sei Shōnagon's *Pillow Book*, which has passed the last several nights in the dim glow of my Petzel Tikinna 2 headlamp set on low, provides an exhaustive catalogue of petty grievances, as pressing today as they were a millennium ago. One has gone to bed and is about to doze off, the Lady complains in her protracted list of Hateful Things, when a mosquito appears, announcing himself in a reedy voice. One can actually feel the wind made by his wings and, slight though it is, one finds it hateful in the extreme. I would add to this list—as I often feel it incumbent upon me to

do—the endless, intermittent tinkling, through the half-open window screen, of one's deaf neighbor's wind chimes; the pre-dawn, post-amorous blather of young robins from the treetops; and one's husband squinting peevishly from his pillow at night when one turns on the bathroom light to fish one's dripping headlamp from the toilet bowl.

*

Kings and commoners alike have known the value of a good pillow forever. From Quito to Cairo to Chicago to Xiangyang, examples can be found in museums all over the world. During my sleepless hours some nights I try to imagine the whole collection.

*

Melatonin. Lunesta. Nyquil. Zzzquil. Ativan. Ambien. Lorazepam. Trazodone. Warm milk. Hot baths. Counting sheep. Counting backwards from a thousand in French. Still I toss and turn through the night with a pillow on my head and another clutched like a mule between my knees.

*

Some nights I search for solutions online. On Google Shopping I find the Sobakawa Cloud, as seen on TV, with over thirty million cooling micro-air beads to conform to my shoulders and neck, while cradling my head in a fluffy cloud of nanotechnology. A pillow over three hundred

years in the making, based on traditional Japanese buckwheat hull pillows, it can be mine for only \$19.99. The promotional video, with its barbells and broken eggshells, is persuasive. Off-putting, however, is the manufacturer's subtle but emphatic prohibition against removing or in any way washing its custom-fit pillowcase, which must be ordered separately at an additional charge.

*

The world has been a trifle 'slow' on the subject of pillows, notes a column in the October 1894 issue of *The Decorator and Furnisher* magazine, advertising, in lieu of feathers or fiber, a row of sturdy steel springs wrapped in cotton batting and stitched up inside a stiff cotton sack. Air is the principal thing, the faded copy insists. Plenty of pure, life-giving oxygen, freely inhaled in the silent watches of the night, gives the crown of beauty to the woman, mental vigor to the man, and the halo of promise to the little folk. Not surprisingly, alas, according to Volume One of *Obsolete American Securities and Corporations*, the Columbus Spring Pillow Company, along with its ill-fated "pillow with lungs," exhaled its last breath into the night above New Jersey in 1896.

*

Later that fall in West Orange, New Jersey, Thomas Edison staged the first pillow fight ever recorded on film. From Edison's catalogue: four young ladies, in their nightgowns, having a romp. One of the pillows gets torn, and the feathers fly all over the room. 45 feet. \$6.75.

*

DREAM JOBS

Random Link Clicker.

Royal Bath Taker.

Receiver of Foot Rubs and Praise.

Chief Executive Napper.

Undersecretary of Trivial Pursuits.

Jester to Her Empirical Majesty of Unverifiable Facts.

Procurer of Unnecessary Hats.

Empress of Ice Cream.

Cloud-Development Supervisor.

Inspector General of Minor Slights.

Editorial Dictator-in-Residence.

Bubble Blower to the Stars.

*

Sei was her father's name, Shōnagon her father's rank. For a brief span of time at the turn of the tenth century, we know that she spent her nights behind a thin paper screen, recording her fugitive aperçus by candle light with an ink stick on rice paper behind the bolted Heian gates. We know that she slept, when she managed to do so, on a small, hollow pillow made of polished bamboo.

*

Things to buy. Things to fix. Things to fold. Things to freeze. Things to paint. Things to unpack. Things to order. Things to renew. Things to revise. Things to discard. Things to dismantle. Things to destroy. The closest I come to writing poems these days are the lists I jot down in the little blue notebook I keep beside my pillow to remind myself, years hence, how my middle years were spent.

*

UNMARKED DAYS

Belabor Day.

World Day Against the Abuse of Perfume.

World Back Talk Prevention Day.

International Day for the Complete Eradication of Goatees.

International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Hidden
Calories in Juice.

United Nations International Day in Support of the Victims of Screen
Fatigue.

International Day in Remembrance of Diaries Altered and Burned.

Day of the Sleep Walker.

Day of the Streetwalker.

International Day of the Overripe Pear.

Daylight Spendings Day.

Divorcee Day.

World Day for the Promulgation and Diffusion of Fog.

Anti-Dabbler Day.

Doris Day Day.

World Day for the Remembrance of the Tiny Hands of the
Tyrannosaurus Rex.

*

I can swim, Her Majesty proclaims from her pillow one morning. By this she means that she can cling to my neck in the shallow end of the university pool while I clap and sing a bouncy song about rain to the tune of “I’m a Little Teapot” with a flagging chorus of other mothers. In the locker room, the toddlers shriek and squirm in sagging swim diapers while we womenfolk sigh and hide behind our towels. Bolted to the ceiling in the corner above the sinks, the TV, perpetually tuned to CNN, crackles with the constant chatter of catastrophe unfolding on the far side of the screen. Her Majesty, I am grateful to observe, has not yet spotted it.

*

Nightsweats? Hot flashes? Headaches? Fever? Migraines? Insect bites? Sore, tired feet? Turn your pillow into a Chillow, for only \$12.95, using a patented, eco-friendly, hypo-allergenic, latex-free, phalate-free, gel-free, battery-free, medical-grade foam insert, available exclusively online, and activated instantly when filled with four pints of ordinary tap water. The hour-long promotional program on Ideal World Channel features the company’s affable British CEO fielding scripted questions from a chatty and conspicuously well-rested looking host. The five hundred and seven customer reviews to date on Amazon.com, it bears noting, average only three-and-a-half stars out of five. Would not recommend to anyone except my former Mother in Law, reports Redhead3970, whose bright white patented Comfort Device sprung a fatal leak within two weeks, and whose comments are typed in all caps.

*

BAD IDEAS THAT WOULD PROBABLY SELL

Camouflage diapers.
Hummingbird cacciatore.
Hamster camp.
Stationary tricycles.
Diet ice.

*

My husband can sleep anywhere. I have a traveling exhibit's worth of shots of him sprawled with his hands behind his head and a beatific grin across his face while my twisted shadow darkens the flimsy excuse for a pillow beside him in hostels, rustic sheds, three-star hotels, and stuffy guest suites across North America, continental Europe, and far-flung regions of Southeast Asia. Do opposites attract? Unresolved patterns attract, avers Paul Cutright, director of the Center for Enlightened Partnerships in Las Vegas and author of the best-selling *You're Never Upset for the Reason You Think*, whose flawless bridgework surfaced on my pillow at 4 a.m. today in a Health and Sex feature I happened across in the dark.

*

Splendid Things. Awkward Things. Things That Make One's Heart Beat Faster. Things That Give a Dirty Feeling. Things That Have Lost Their Power. Things That Should Be Small. Things That Give a Hot Feeling. Things That Cannot Be Compared. A hundred and sixty-four of Sei Shōnagon's incomparable lists have survived the tempestuous centuries.

*

The most remarked-upon aspect of her *Pillow Book* by far, they seem to lack any literary precedent. They have been emulated, parodied, and appropriated by many, but no one knows quite what to make of them. There are *Pillow Book* scholars, I learned over crock-pot meatballs and boxed wine at a junior faculty potluck in the Quad Club last night, whose research focuses exclusively on these lists. Some are simply long catalogues of proper names—mountains, temples, islands, towns—of interest, in so far as they suggest the approximate contours of the Heian woman's world, exclusively to the scholar, allows one scholar begrudgingly.

*

As a child I lay awake many nights on my pillow with a flashlight and a box of cards from my favorite parlor game, Trivial Pursuit. To this day, I would gladly recite what Thames bridge one must cross to get to Kew Gardens; which three European countries begin with the letter A; what sport two teams of Union Army soldiers played before a crowd of 40,000 at Hilton Head, South Carolina in 1862; and what snack food a University of South Florida engineering professor spent six years studying the crunch of, if asked. I am not much fun to play with, apparently, and have gone unchallenged for years.

*

In the quaint vernacular of chronobiology—the study of circadian rhythms’ effects on the behavior, anatomy, genetics, and molecular biology of living organisms—the world is divided between owls and larks. Some people are born good sleepers and some are not. Some of us rise every morning to greet the day’s labors with smiles on our dewy-fresh faces, and some of us, simply, do not. What bars owls from sleep, furthermore, is not the bungled pullout of troops from Afghanistan; not the nuclear stew off the coast of Japan; not our toddlers’ pre-ballet teachers’ incessant requests for Saturday morning volunteers; not the mysterious leak that sprung last month in the garage; not depression, anxiety, stress, or disrepair; but simply an inborn disposition to wander the hallways by moonlight or lie awake on one’s pillow making lists.

*

IFFY SIMILES

Classy as a cruise ship.
Patient as a pimp.
Simple as a snowflake.
Sexy as an ankh.
Green as the Green Zone.
Cozy as a coffin.
Friendly as fire.
Easy is as easy does.

*

After tracing hearts with the tip of my finger across Her Majesty's back and nauseam in the dark before losing it at last and storming off to fold socks, I step outside for a smoke under the stars. I bring my tepid Sancerre. I collapse in a wet deck chair and exhale, triggering the trigger-happy floodlight above the garage, which blinds me briefly and goes dark. For the first time all day, I'm fully awake. Snow blows in pillowy drifts along the brick wall to the west. Clouds glide overhead, downy rafts beyond reach. I pick a fixed point in the velvet abyss and make a wish: May all kamma be resolved and the mind-flower of wisdom bloom in Nibbàna's eternal spring. And may I squeeze back into last year's jeans. My star winks and turns red, and then banks to the right and heads east, in the general direction of dawn. In the distance, someone laughs, and then spits.

*

from THE YESTERDAY PROJECT

Ben and Sandra Doller

08.10.2014

Yesterday was a long day. What does that mean? There was a full moon later, into today, I suppose, and I'm not sure if we heard the coyotes today or yesterday, but we heard them and it seemed like there was a human party going on. Earlier we had run some errands around the town, the rows of stripmalls like insipid brown legos. We had a big box/little box consumer sandwich going on, Home Depot, the farmer's market, Sue's Health Foods, the appliance store to confirm our delivery. There, the woman told us they had a set to match the oven we bought. She showed it to us and it was a wall of ovens, beautiful top of the line 80s appliance with push buttons and dials like some kind of HAL. But then we would have 3 ovens for two of us in the desert, and we don't make roasts. I kind of still want it, and I know you do, you don't want to break the set, but there's no need for it at all. I hadn't slept well the night before and we slept a bit yesterday through the day. It was a long day, which is good sometimes, we looked at the stars for a while at the end of the day and the dogs were free to roam as much as they wanted, though for the most part they stayed with us. We had the A/C on earlier, but when I exercised and made dinner we left it on, turned it off in the earlier evening and let the hot cooling breeze in. We got plenty of veggies, and plenty of tools at home depot. Home Depot is like no depot I've ever seen, it's more like a museum of facts that you need to understand how to use. How do they decide where to send you when you walk in, like in the evil groceries you're shot straight towards the potato chips and corn syrup sodas. In home depot there are two entrances on either side of the place, two exits as well, and then there's also a contractor's entrance as well. Then there's a small door for tool rentals. I suppose you might walk into the ceiling fans, but

everything is specialized. I was looking for a screwdriver, a small one to put together an Ikea picture frame, and a chihuahua almost attacked me from his foxhole in his owner's cart. We couldn't find the bathroom in there. We only ate small snacks all day until I made some stuffed peppers for dinner, filled with quinoa and covered with a quick red sauce. Here's how to do it: caramelize some cut tomatoes in oil on an iron pan, along with whole cloves of garlic, then transfer them into the oven for 20 minutes or so. Then blend in your Vitamix. It makes a good, no fuss sauce. We visited the Panda out front, the dogs do whatever we say when we are stoned. We tried to watch Grand Duel from our spaghetti western DVD but my Macbook died after 20 minutes, the cord we brought doesn't work with it. I had this other laptop, the one I'm typing on now, the SONY. I thought it was a terrible thing, but it is useful, it plays dvds, so we tried that after we did it sweetly. There is a UFO convention in town and when we sat outside again, we thought we saw something moving, but it's all basically satellites. I'd like to describe our desert home for those of you who are reading this, but this project is about what happened, not what it looks like. You are all invited to a big party sometime soon. I thought a little about how the desert seems so good, how you and I are now ordained, how we will marry our friends together in the desert in a month. It agrees with us. I did this workout where you jump a thousand times, I could feel the oxygen attacking all the inflammation from the surgery. There were no UFOs or bats, not even my soul creature the white owl who flew out of a tree when I sat on the bench below him. Which brings us to the last thing we watched, the documentary on Leonard Cohen taming the mob audience at the Glastonbury fest in 1970. I had no idea. 600,000 people were there for 5 days. They were lighting the stage on fire, burning the gates and walls. They were knee deep in trash. Hendrix and the Who played, Kris Kristofferson was booed off the stage. The youth were restless and pointless. Leonard Cohen came on at 4 in the morning and his performance was presented as calming the mob. The footage was fantastic. His band was called the Army. Have you ever heard the early songs of Leonard Cohen?

It's complete Canadian Dylan, but with songs that build, songs that are willing to go completely melodramatic, songs with desperation. Okay, the guy was a genius but the reason there wasn't a riot was because the kids were sleepy and high and they wanted to listen to the poetry, which was substantial. They wanted someone to look them straight in the eye and make them feel stupid.

AUGUST 10, 2014

Yesterday Leonard Cohen took us down, by the river, where we could hear the British chatter, we could go on this way forever . . .

They say he stepped out of his trailer in pajamas. I wanted to see that part. Instead he held crowd in a safari suit almost skirt-like, mop head almost Dylan almost Prince Valiant. You just have to believe there were almost riots.

Leonard Cohen does what both poetry and music do, but also what French does: delayed syntax, orchestrated image, nasal intonation, repetitive up swing from low tone, mood over melody. Leonard Cohen does it best at 4 in the morning.

We decided not to focus only on Leonard from yesterday.

We also went to the desert farmer's market in Joshua Tree where the people and the vegetables looked like they'd been better. You saw the Joshua Tree Sheriff walking through, she was waving like in a parade but just walking in her Sheriff suit. You pointed her out to me, how did you know she was the for real Sheriff, I thought she was just an old lady doing something crazy.

We went back to Carlos' Appliances to arrange the delivery. Our new used appliances were marked "sold." Carlos was out but his wife was in. She showed us the matching wall ovens we could get. We would have 3 ovens then, what does anyone do with 3 ovens. Families, another problem.

She showed us something that blew her mind, a whole house water filtration system. It looked like a helium tank for balloons or scuba. I told her she should keep it, it's good for your hair and skin. She said they get reports on the contaminations in the water in 29 Palms, not good.

We got a bag of peppers from the market, I wasn't sure how we'd eat them all. I said casually, maybe we could stuff them. I've never stuffed a pepper, I don't know what I'm talking about. Then all of a sudden, you're stuffing peppers and making them. Three peppers, red and green, with quinoa, zucchini, mushrooms and a roasted tomato and garlic puree on top. Plus a little bit of that gouda and truffle cheese from Vennissimo, the last of it. I'm glad it's gone.

Is this boring or is this a record. Is a record boring. Is it playing with boredom. Is it evidence that we are not the same body after all. You get cancer, I don't. We have our own days. Did I say that before?

New thought: the monument of yesterday is hilarious, as if something really happened. And if it did, it would already be over. It all sounds so grave, so equally significant.

I wore a little cotton shirt I almost gave away with small yellow and brown and blue cornflowers drawn on it, a ruching around the cap sleeves and a linen panel at the top. It's a very girly shirt and I look like a girl in it. Especially with my dirty hair in a bun. I wear cut off jean shorts and a nice little sprinkle of leg hair.

I am always moving from past to present tense like a downhill, I just can't quit the present. Is this wrapping up or will it go on forever? How is a Leonard Cohen song about a woman also about a city? Why are women and children still one category?

We look for Kiki's light but it's lost. We walk on the sand in our desert yard, or is it a compound, or a rancho, or an estate. A grounds.

Nothing really happened yesterday. I looked at my pink iPhone a little bit. Delphine had a question about where to get groceries when they got in. I

answered her an hour later, is that too late. Rae had a question about your book. I typed her back because your fingers are too big to type on a phone.

I bought us two bags of kale chips at Sue's Foods. I made fun of going to Sue's Foods, all one word, slurring. We ate the kale chips all over ourselves, all over the car, all over our teeth.

I dropped my electric toothbrush on the ground and it broke. That might have been the day before.

We need to spend more time outside here.

RELAPSING / REMITTING

Carolina Ebeid

The lord doctor sits on the other side
of health from me. It's a wall come between
flat & white & spackled in places—

I was a student of ELOQUENCE.
I'd shape my mouth into a fountain
& out the names cascaded in June—

My brain is described in slow sentences
in similes like: grapefruit, telephones,
the medieval district of a city.

In ELOQUENCE though I couldn't fit
the madness in—no icy jackhammer
pneumatics, no I-can't-hear-myself-think.

Progress: the loss of neuron & synapse
Progress: tall lights of a stadium shut
one by one until the ballpark is left
in darkness. Then degeneration of
the temporal. Then furrows will close
the furrows that the cheering voices carved
in the air will close. This is what happens—

cerebellum, the beautifullest sound
in the room

I rested my length in its green meadows.

HE NEEDS A STAGE OR A PEDESTAL OR A PINNACLE

Natalie Eilbert

In my sack I place an inventory: cartilage, cracked skull,
thumb, belt buckle, femur, bicuspid, shin, pelvis, scalp tuft.
The hero does not look like himself here, disjointed earth fruit
poised against nothing but the material of sack. I want power
for him more than I wanted to turn a cock into gold.
So I shake the contents. My memory spits a cloud into grief.
He is lucky I want to depict him as whole. He is lucky I slip
into calling him you. The bones rattle their botched future,
man's time doesn't freeze so much as it cordyceps to privilege. For example:
I was so sad to see you go I cut myself on the blade of gone.
My belly blossoms under the pebbles I've swallowed to keep dignity.
And the dignity of men is so important, a profligate red
beams from my throat. The distance I crave necessitates holy
striations, a coin that should roll from one hyperbole to the next.
I have asked to take residency in the mission of reconstruction:
Eden is covered in wet bathroom tiles, cracked with fecal dazzle
scenting the city with its small magazines. A worship as occupied

as its water damage. You see I have taken my sack here
and gazed into the sprouted dark, I lick at the botulism,
I hum in the warfare I've attempted to unweave and find
the man's song is gentle, his nickel rolls such a gentle, gentle song.

LIQUID WASTE

You want to be turned in the dust because
the dust makes you holy the dust dries you
out the dust dusts your dust as oceans unto
oceans as shame unto shame. The carriage is
holy it spills because it is mine reduced to clasped
appendage. Black eyes out of black windows,
the white lurch of a face is male, see how he
sees me as dust dusts the dust the dust's instructions.
May he be holy. May he plunge headlong
into holes in search of language and may he
find language as when my mother finds language
stretched from her/my daughter's mouth in her/my
book of mouths. May my mother read her/my
tears as sins and may sins be the sins of his lurching
white faces. I tear the sins from his mouth as sins
form from the wreck of the resolution of power.
My mother tears bread and shoves the bread
through his mouth and out his hole and so
may my mother be the metabolism the man needs
to grow older. And so may the oceans wad with bad

fish. May the holes shape themselves into a carriage
to better spill. The man brines headlong in the bready hole
of my mother. Glutinous zodiacs. Animals leap
into flower form. I auto bio graph my cud, I chew rind.
I carriage myself across the room in secret puddle worship.

FRONTIER

Brian Foley

for Claire Cronin

Let me give
the name of
the location

of the world
in the autumn-
logged brain.

What conspires
in a clot
of moonlight

its cloth
unreleased

I recognize
across a removal
as the blueprint

of the angle
we're inspired
to choose from
tonight:

leaves,
sticks & beer

cans
as bright
as knives

from GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

Leora Fridman

can a person pray
and be lazy,

ask and
still know,

have a father,
an earth mother

and a plaintive wail?

can I wear this
really only
for the weather?

can television
tell me
what year
we are in?

my clothing
only confuses

*

when I take large gulps of water it means
I am on the side of the climate

I am on the side
of the forces that be

even in a drought the water wants to be with me

is it true—
tell me, weather,

if I want to be with you
can I be true?

am I a true lover
to warm cemeteries

heating
in the drought?

am I true to you
while I watch?

can we spoon
one inside the other

riverlands
woodlands
woods
smoothed bright
for flooring

my most common occasion
to be one with the woods
is just to stand

*

riverland, I sip ya
may you and I retire well

may they say:

*they always wanted
to be together*

inseparable riverland
until when will we play

riverland,
in prayer I stand with ya

on ya, never fishing

always penitent
never in sight

*

AMONG NORWEGIANS

(FOR KARL OVE KNAUSGAARD)

James Haug

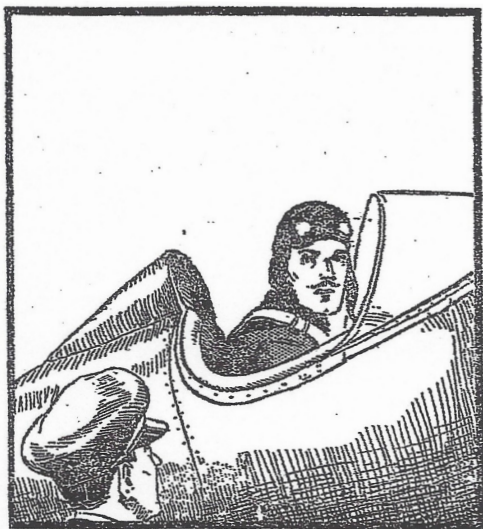
*Illustrations from Tailspin Tommy and the Lost Transport, illustrated by Hal Forrest,
published as a Better Little Book by Whitman Publishers, Racine, Wisconsin, in 1939.*



Maine is known the world over
for its craggy coastline,



known even among Norwegians.



On vacation, I'm permitted
no more than three revelations.



Prowess: mistress of the prow.



To the window I went,
remembering snow.



A young maple was daily growing.



I leave the house in a trance,
without glasses.



My briefcase buffeted by the wind.



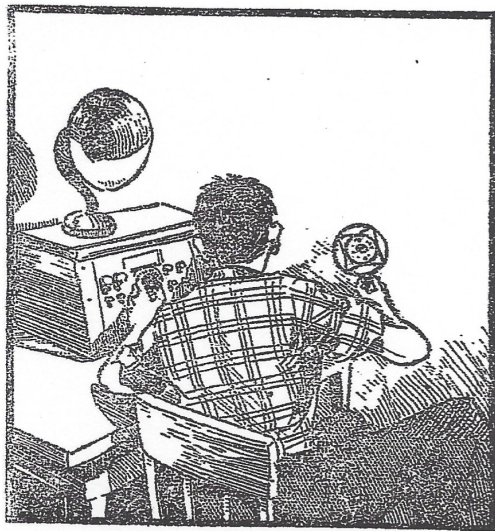
It takes panic to fix things.



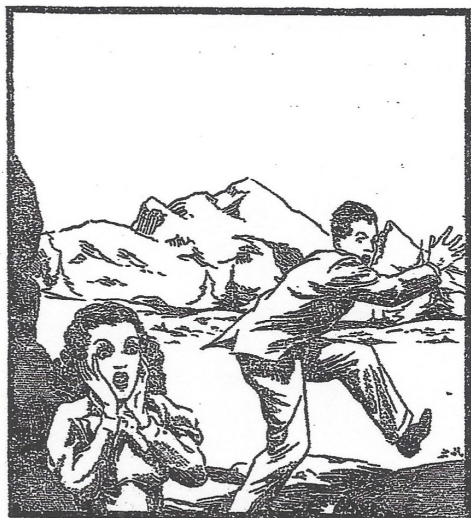
Better if it's late.



Better to say waxing.



Glue works wonders,
some pathos.



We're fishtailing up a hill.
Crews are out.



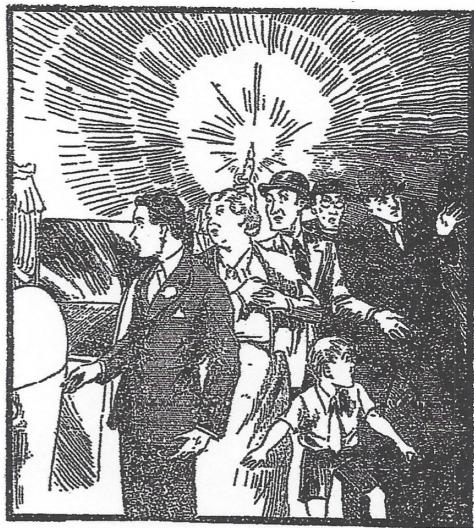
When it's time to walk
we walk.



When it's time to walk
we imagine



the reality of the city.



What we see is tall
and intended for us.



Blurred cars withdraw.



Salt.



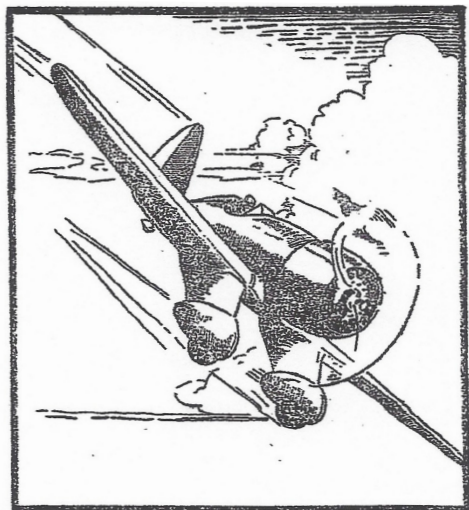
With no sign of anyone else
we say we.



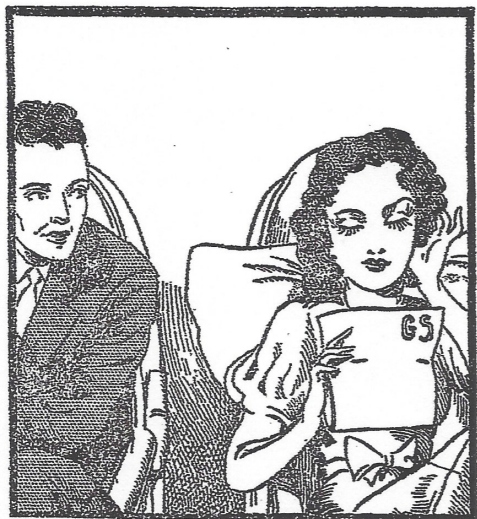
What I said once about coffee was true



but I don't say it anymore.



If you've got time, I'm running
into The Hungry Ghost.



I'm buying the last soft pretzel.

IN DEFENSE OF VIOLENT PROTEST OR TO THOSE WHO WOULD SHAME THEM FOR RIOTING OR A POEM FOR BLACK MOTHERS

Brionne Janae

because we always too dark for sight
we must speak with the tongue of the sightless
release bricks like tears loose
toxins from blood,
shroud our shoulders in black smoke
shawl against winds of neglect,
beloved come, illuminate the night

cause we one body and if you carve
out my right side, leave it pooling on pavement
hours exposed no death rights no grace
shouldn't I scream, please,
help me understand, do you think me monster
some fleshless phantom that can bear
the sight of my body staining
the street and not cry out

hear me, we not built for silence

because now aint the time to talk
to God, body teach this phantom spirit to cast
off submission, shuck this yearning
for peace, shout spirit be still
till can't be no more still—
then, body remember me those old
testament ways of heat and blazing pyres
and let God look down at a creation on fire

and if this is what it must be
this, just one pass of the grindstone,
a single step in the erosion of my body into ash
then consider this our ritual
sacrament, holy, preparation for the embalming
of our own children, the ones we will bring screaming
into life, in spite of fear
and grip to our bodies like death
till they be black death embodied
cold on the boiling asphalt
and wont we be ready then
—yes—wont we be ready

LUPINES

Hanae Jonas

In those days I'd put lupines
in a jar on the table. There were women
who feared me for being a kid.
Listen, he'd say, now you call the shots.
But get the pokers out of your eyes.
It was a really big time
dreaming slick by the river. I learned
to hold still so the small fish
gathered round. Imagined
getting rich would be something like that.
Blue flowers in a jar with the label still on.
A minor act of allowing
nature to come near.
How its authority

revealed me, electric and small.
My brain full of shame
and blonde hair. I was darker
than them, wrenching weeds from the yard.
But how still I could hold, how he held me
so still. Listen,
he'd say, you can always pick again.
But the jars I kept filling
with the feral blue stalks. The planets
coming round like a stray dog you fed
once. How their teeth gleamed
with a sureness, like graves.
How I came up out of it, a stone wall crumbling down.

IN THE PALACE FULL OF PASSED-OUT PEOPLE

Jennifer L. Knox

Brainwaves of the big ones have slumped
down on a bench—out of the rain, for now
(as the planet pivots, eventually all its faces
get the hose—whatever the weather/socks).
A security guard gently jostles their shoulders
for he's asleep, too, and one of his arms just
fell off. Hey, guard: you gonna eat that?

Brainwaves of the little ones are getting
scrambled when they jump the fence—taser
zapped!—a rodeo clown chases them into
a pen and waits for them to walk. By then
they could be a security guard, or lucky
to be so. Chubby in a uniform,
hollowed by glycemic rot.

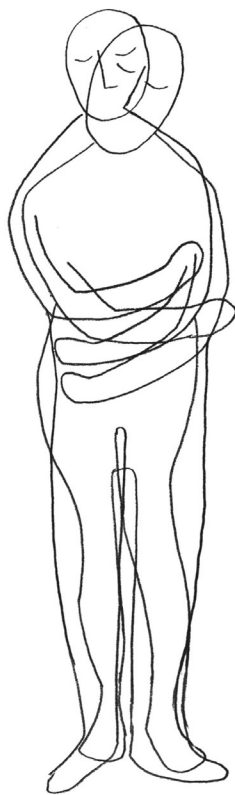
MONOCHROME RAINBOWS

I used to worry a lot about money
(and think about killing myself), too,
but today I'm rich! All because I took
an enormous pill that made me
a financial genius and now I know
how to do all sorts of money things like
a pro but better than a pro (a queen!):
speculate on futures, for example,
and manage risk. *Very* lucrative stuff.
Did you know if you Google "APR,"
you get stuff about the Annual Percentage Rate—
not *American Poetry Review*? Well, now I do,
and I can make the most incredible spreadsheet:
when I push the mystery button
(which is no longer a mystery to me!)
money shoots out of it, then my eyes,
which no longer see colors other than
green but bees do that, too, right?
And they seem happy enough
in their heavy bodies.

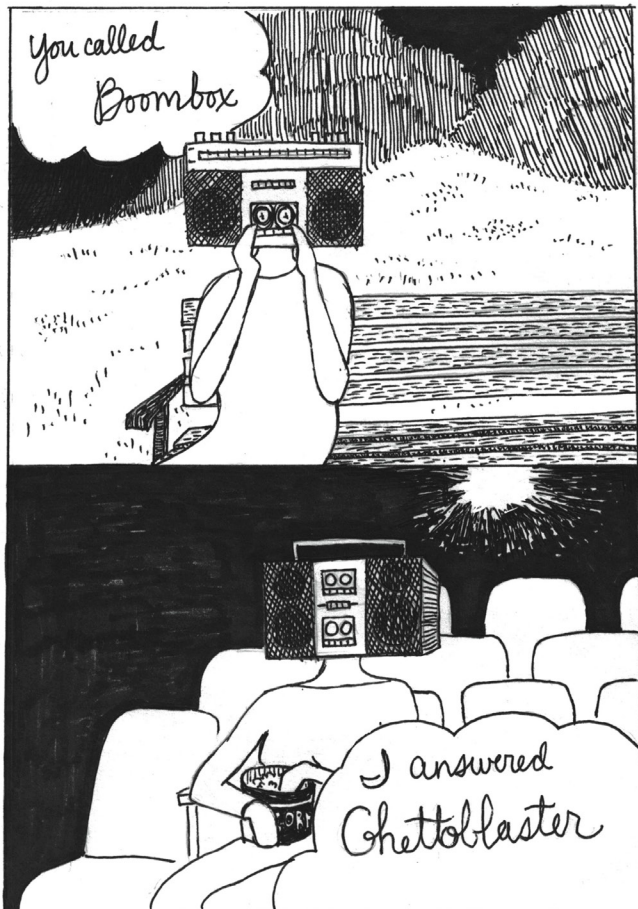
All the
SIGNPOSTS
were torn
from the
concrete

by Chris Martin & Mary Austin-Speaker

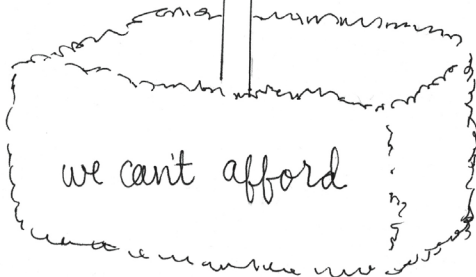
The airplane
inside us
was running
out
of
pretzels

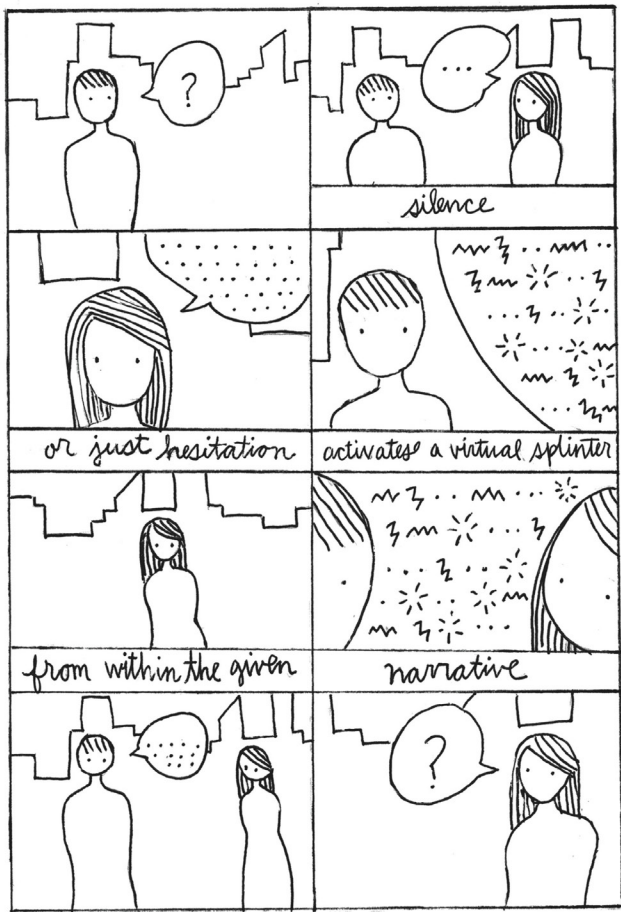






skirting the
neighborhoods
of





the sun's



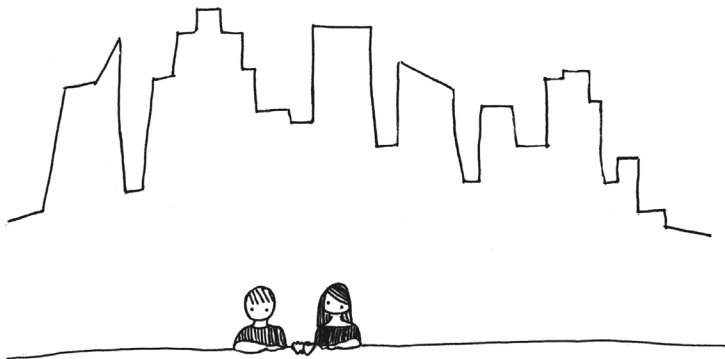
*of
gold teeth*

You came into my life



to change it





I want
you

to
hold
the
amulet

while
I carry
you over
the river

PASTORAL WITH NO QUARTER

Lo Kwa Mei-en

My vanguard is here to lose a horse called *Fear*
Object in the image of a meadow. There, the gold
of earth confirmed, softer than my face but faster
than a finger in suburbia licking off disaster's

Hello. My sword is honey. There, a reason to fear
it is nothing but. But for its edge go we? How
it forged a humanity in me, then made me how
he said I'd be—wherefore person, once, but faster.

There, a correct hero: bent in wind, covered skin,
depressed like a non-white button. A face his kin
food-group as coloring, muttering. Reports show
acceptance watering the meadow's sugar blades

under a watery sunset flensed by the dilute blade
of my friend. I sealed a rot of self under my skin
for sweetness' sake. My gun is honey whipped mean.
My cavalry thinks of making love but cannot mean

wild horses surviving the saddle, bit, and bald
heaven insuring a citizen's eye the mindless green
of paper honey, or a supremacist sheet of golf green
repeated. Let she who survives by her mouth mean

kickback. Let bravado's vibrato be a swollen braid
lowered into a hive of men. Be a bad, girlish blade
lopping the hype in two, a bouquet of wildish green
shrieking out in alarming arms. Let my visible skin

see you out. Let my sisters in, my magicians, kin
body-checking factories where the body turned blade
zeroed to the *x* of we. It's annihilation magic—how
automatic. My footnote is a compulsion to throw

down a mercy. Once upon a time, we saved the skin
refusing to say the crime while heaving to sing faster.
Our conscience was half honey, then it went faster
than golden years in which six men unmade me. How

little danger in dishabille they said I'd be. The gold
comes rising out of me, and then what kings said gold
should be—like man, but better. Or honey, but faster,
fearful. But honey you ought be. My monarch is feral.

from THE NIGHTINGALE

*Said the emperor, “The whole world knows what I possess
better than I do myself.”*

It was wrong of me to diss the stiffly evolving corn.
It longs to be mediocre, as do the years I did not live.

I have never felt so American as the time I mated
a poem I imagined would terrorize my sexualization

to a poem I tore up after the sex act of immigration
and stayed awake that you, haute poet, might see me

period. I have lived sans full-length mirror since 2009
as a call-out with a hole. Bile fills it, flapping prettily,

a feeling that flips me off—oh-ho, what a pretty bird.
It was *what* of me to serve up drama like a salty verb,

like haute semen, like a vigil buttressing a pantoum?
A tiny gold key is overstimulating the rented grove.

Rewind the formula—a rental god, quiche, and title
divide two girly criminals on a brilliant fabergé pyre.

“Little maiden,” said the lord-in-waiting, “I will obtain for you constant employment in the kitchen, and you shall have permission to see the emperor dine, if you lead us to the nightingale . . .”

It was hawt of me to serve our trauma to a man
who cries royal, white tears into a casserole au vin.

A white woman may enter the castle via credit.
They let me in the foyer to multiply into kinks to

divvy in girls. To ombré our genius into his crime
into my anorexia showing a little national anthem.

It is so wasted of me to ask a nation for acceptance
when all I want is to eat and drink sans feeling

for bleeding, and in the armoire I am a mere chink
with some nerve. Let us dine with appropriate chill.

I made the city nervous. I was removed apropos of
universality, that pretty, hegemonic, doe-shaped doe.

Want of whiteness is wine for lunch, the pain of full
-ness such a greatness, he made my replica right away.

*Beautiful flowers, round which little bells were tied, stood in the corridors . . .
these bells tinkled so loudly that no one could speak to be heard.*

He made my other in a nest to correct my making,
my survivor's skill-set wrapped in a string of theory—

the universe is a moral condo where essentialist Joe
may pouch, soap, and rinse his genitals in systemic

privacy—as cheap coke wrings my stem out on sofas
in duplex forest units so I forget every trauma I live

my other lives too—a thread snaps in an Oriental rug
uncleanly and *poof!*, evidence this disease saved her

the worst of me—proof of my drinking anywhere he
fingered and spread me about like a soft manifesto

forgetting forgot in the suburb I could not say *Leave*,
not *Take me, instead*—he saw my rude lip in her face

instead—we crossed like a ruby see-saw and I sang
frankly for the body to believe it can, it won't, exist—

“Is it possible?” said the lord-in-waiting, “I never imagined it would be a little, plain, simple thing like that. She has certainly changed color at seeing so many grand people around her.”

My manifesto is soft. My finger points to my own head.
My want for a force of nature, a lovely lack of thrust

in trust. My less-and-less horror at my natural beauty
than my engineer is able to upholster my pleasure

void with. My body exists but cannot be an insurgent
hole tip, it tips. My country is a confessional narrative

-lyric debut. My nationality is an ISBN in my cunt,
my king moving in and out of a structure of no choice

not in this story. My pleasing mechanism is holstered
in white space fattened off similes in a timothy field

poems stuff like birds lovable but filthy with fable.
My allegory is anxious. Can it believe what it did to

my oh my—the timely penetration of a head in a crown
looks this good. My knees are weak. My mind is weak.

from INSOMNIA

Katie Mertz

the tongue sits metal in the mouth
as the clapper in its heavy bell

only inanimate objects matter

my agency is only this coin
in a pocket ripped jeans

on a man rolled to the knee
wading through his flooded harbor

what of this night what of the wine
in its bottle sour from the wet heat

I produce in this room clanging
from me as a reeking wind

orange from the root
this is my human fruit

infrastructure for a thing
in a place so deep I spend

a lifetime just searching for it
I've heard it in the cold oven

the drowsy hours of faucet
water in a towel on my face

all the lights are off my body
is strong for no reason

I am singing in an open space

from the part of me that smells
most like my dead relatives

ironic the lark outside my window
but maybe it's not hope in his belly

I drink this water and now it is in me
it won't be this way forever

FLOOD LANGUAGE

David James Miller

or meander scar
this capillary
swells as encoded
skin and pattern /
apparition etched
as what was—

crevasse splay gradients /
repetition an echo
pulse flow to estuary flush

shallows / capillared
surface dispersal
patterns in dia
grammatic landscape
forecast model / its
equivalent : accession
number

CORDS OF LISTENING
WATERS PRISMATIC
GLASS CORNERED
ANGLES PIVOT IRRIGATION
AND SURFACE MINING
OPERATIONS—

the current take
and print of stone
tenses in-form
pulses crest / course
arc of hours lists
catenary as augur—

the word arrays
recedes / static listening—
the palimpsest inter
sect / *eschaton* and *ethics*
an intake tower level
fluctuation

steeple rises from the reservoir

waterline an afterimage
motion-coded in flint / lit
narrativity—
along the waterline
winnow chapel / lilacs
press outward : channel
radiant night

peer surface remnant
thin-film interference
rings outward a gnosis
iterative / inter
sect islet silt shallows
a cut watercourse—

echo concludes
in a thinned stand of fir

THREE POEMS

Cate Peebles

The time machine to
immortality is a dance I do
in an un-air-conditioned
lodge to Madonna's "Like
a Prayer" because it's
exactly like the only prayer
I know, so much that it's
actual grace & all this
sweat makes it so— our
awkward bodies make
it so; our hands, such
anxious white birds until
they rest on a salty limb,
make it so, as the disco
lights fleck silver on your
face like the moon spit you
out with a fresh cocktail
in your hand & how I
want a sip to make me less
aware of how I try to put
my feet here & there &
not die or be seen from
certain angles but will
sway in front of the fan as
if a dank comet dropped
me in your lap & finally

I'm not trying to look cool
or anything just dripping
& wanting to unzip
everything around you
so it falls away succulent
from the bone so all that's
left is a golden fucking sun
pumping fireballs like a
swollen lung: the building
drops from the sky your
shirt & pants & earthly
body dissolve & I crawl
inside like the haggard
spirit of a bear in October
curling up for winter
under dry leaves far from
the highway & it's still not
tomorrow

You're right, I want to impress upon you how only I see the sky & the exact vision of what is my vivid palette & I say on the way to hot dogs "Look, a bird of prey!" & you glance up almost walking into a fire hydrant, saying "No, it's a silver balloon," & really if I want to impress you with my scant knowledge of the natural world I should tell you about jellyfish & how they grow new limbs when their legs are torn off rotating what's left of themselves until a new extremity forms as all creatures remake themselves somehow & the balloon rises higher than a hawk straight up & I'm aware of the pain caused by wearing flip flops too often, splitting new scabs down the middle & growing a new head inside the old one full of snail eggs— it's hardest to know a person & hard to be a person & harder yet to let a person hold your wet eggshells & I just want you to be happy that I know the difference between carrion birds & baby robins on hot asphalt & helium objects sent to the sun with an address attached at rope's end & a note that says:

WRITE TO ME
& TELL ME
ABOUT
THE TREES
WHERE YOU
LIVE

& I think it's fine if you fall on your face beside me—what falls is fine what falls is finally home so look

What I have seen in my
past lives are all the flames
made by martyrs' hair
cast through magnifying
glasses in a camera obscura
where no life means life is
life still here & drops from
the ceiling as burning trees
in full bloom projected on
a bedroom wall & isn't it
cold where time makes
fierce blue holes in the head
like a platter of raw eel &
mollusks turned upside
down & I am the only one
eating tonight in the tree
house I believe no ground
will have me as I am grown
here the world got green
then greenest since we
met & the thick mess of it
sucks on the naked limbs
& sky stuck to our eyes in
winter & bit down hard to
feed in spring & now this
overwhelming shelter with
its photosensitive reaching
& forgetful cast of leaf &

chatter from primeval
woodlands swallowing
our smeared devices &
goodnights whole so we
see the slow swallow bulge
& listen, there are night
birds in the sycamore a
lump lodged in the throat
is what I'll call a calendar
covered in coal dust as a
mouse recites lunar phases
& is digested by an owl in
the dark you drop me off
without a kiss on this new
planet of glass & leaves
fogged from the outside
where we reach through
gloom to get inside the
insides grabbing for the
sticky heart & ropes
we hope to find there

ESPRIT DE CORPS

Camille Rankine

What do we ask of a body. To form an arrangement called beauty. To gather the form and send it forward. To go forward and be received. Some days I can't reach. A body draws its borders and requires. The hand closes on desire. The mouth opens for an offering. A form rising to its need. What is a body worth. What is permitted. The eye swallows what is owed. What has been will be. In the dream, I am unbound. And very. This state of secrets I can't keep. I speak and I speak. Time was, I was nothing. With a body like that. What will be asked of me. To be faithful to the ground. We've cut up and covered. To be beholden. To be seen and therefore. To be seen.

SELF-PORTRAIT AS ALLEGORY

Within your house I am a shadow,
large against the wall.

I speak. The shadow
bares its teeth. I mind my mouth.

I sit up straight. You carve a shape
with me inside.

Within my frame, I brim.
I writhe. *The devil*

you say. I turn
my head, I slip

outside—a new moon
rising. Casts no shadow.

I take my time. I whet my blade.
I cut myself a shape.

I fit myself inside. I close
my eyes & seal the whole

of myself. As I wish it. As I insist.
And I don't smile. I just won't

smile. A new light
sifts to the surface.

I effort through
& fill my shape.

The whole of it. I am aflame.
Around me, everything dies.

I move within my life.
I fill myself.

I leave you behind.
I leave you behind.

AN INTERVIEW WITH CAMILLE RANKINE

Camille Rankine's book *Incorrect Merciful Impulses* was published in 2016 by Copper Canyon Press. Her chapbook *Slow Dance with Trip Wire* received the Poetry Society of America's 2010 New York Chapbook Fellowship. A 2016 visiting poet in the University of Massachusetts Amherst's Program for Poets and Writers, she serves on the Executive Committee for VIDA: Women in Literary Arts.

This interview took place over email over the course of a few months in 2015/16.

DARA WIER: *"I'm always taking notes Then, in the quiet, I take stock," is something you say in another conversation. Can you go into this some—say, what kind of notes do you take? Are they telegraphic, more narrative, speculative, in bits and pieces, illustrated? Are they in prose or poetry or a mix of the two or neither or both? (if you'd like to include a sample of a passage or page of notes, we can do that here, if you like).*

CAMILLE RANKINE: The notes I take aren't really poetry, and they barely qualify as prose—they're just scraps, really. Bare bones. A short phrase or a word that was interesting to me. Sometimes just a concept I hear something about and think in the moment that I'd like to look into it more deeply.

When you say "take stock" can you go into detail about how this tends to affect your writing?

When I'm writing from these notes, it can be slow going. It's sort of a process of accrual. I take a look at what I've written down and start to

string words and phrases together and see what comes of it. Sometimes nothing comes of it and I scrap the effort, save the scraps for later.

Not everything that strikes me in the moment ends up working for a poem, but often times a poem will grow out of an idea within a line or phrase that didn't survive.

When you can tell something—a phrase, a line—isn't going to survive in its original setting, have you come to recognize anything in particular that tends to make something endangered?

Occasionally it's a line I'm a little too in love with but for the wrong reasons. Like I'm being clever, and I know it, and the line just doesn't fit. But most times, it's just that when I first begin putting lines together, I'm not always sure where the poem is going, or what it is I'm trying to say. It can start out as a bit of a hodgepodge of ideas. Then after I work through the poem again and again, I start to comb out the tangles, tease out the purpose, and then it becomes a bit more clear what does and what doesn't belong. So at that point, a line that I found interesting at first may be set aside. Sometimes those lines survive and find their way into other poems, and sometimes they're just casualties.

What sorts of things are you keeping track of or identifying or naming—these are just guesses, I don't mean to suggest this is what you do—I'm asking if, if you feel you want to, you can tell us what sorts of things you like to find or hope to find when you take stock.

It's not always clear to me what attracts me to the language in my notes. I don't think I'm hoping for anything, in particular. I'm just trying to stay open. I suppose if there's anything I hope for it's just that—to be open to the next idea, to know a poem or the possibility for a poem when it presents itself to me.

Your work is admired for its carefully imagined forms and content, shape, sonics, surprising stances, alert and challenging thought; will you elaborate on some of that, especially in terms of how the intermingling of all those pieces of what's part of poetry exchange qualities or otherwise influence one another?

I'm a careful person and I think that comes through in my work. But I try to let the poems wander a bit, too—I don't want to box them in. As I'm working my way through an idea or a question in a poem, I use all the tools at my disposal to get the space of the poem to feel and sound the way the space of that process—of sitting with that idea, living in it—the way that feels and sounds to me.

And I guess the word space is important there, because there's always a gap between what I'm trying to understand or communicate and what I'm able to pin down and convey. That's inevitable, and I think it's necessary to recognize that, because there can be power in that gap. It's a bit like I'm casting out a fishing line, and I control the things I can with the rod and the tackle, and then there are all these elements on the other end of the line that I can't control.

I understand how important it is to feel as if one is being a careful person. And it does come across clearly in your poems, and in other interviews I've read.

When you mention "all the tools at my disposal" do you mind saying what some of these are? Relevant to the word "space" in particular.

Is it important? Sometimes I wish I were a less careful person! I do admire people who don't always feel the need to proceed with caution, in their life and in their work. But that's never been who I am as a person or a writer, and that's that. So I'm careful about how I put poems together, and I'm especially particular about how my poems sound. I tend to be attracted

gathers
by spit & sweat and sorrow

I ~~struggle~~ cradle it in a blanket

if ^(all) the letters to me writes anyone

I didn't write to tell you that hiding
the wind/breeze through the leaves
the sound like a wave - the
dusk on the line

you didn't write to tell me —

I want to disappear/have
not be a danger or in danger
belonging here.

~~on my~~ ^{cradle} I ~~let~~ my darling ache
~~at what pressure~~
what beauty it makes of me.

to think the cloud drift/moves for me,
or to think it doesn't
I am ~~not~~ nothing to the trees, nothing
as I should be. nothing to the
snake but a danger

to interior rhyme, to repetition.

When I'm drafting and revising a poem, I'll read it out loud over and over to see if it sounds right, if the rhythm of the lines is unfolding in a way that makes sense to my ear. And this connects to the way I use the space of the page. Line length, line breaks, white space—they can all contribute so much to the emotional tone of the poem, through pace, through breath, through visual impression.

And, maybe just a little bit off topic here, but since you mention fishing----do you fish? And if so what kind of fishing do you do? I grew up fishing, shrimping, crabbing and later fly fished a lot. And farming. I guess this means I grew up fairly used to some intentions anyway being clear—as in doing some things with a clear intention, as in you might pretty much know what it is you want: you plant tomato seeds to get tomato plants, you fish for trout, you fish for bass, you fish for catfish, you don't want to hook an eel (I only say that cause it seems I was always catching eels when I didn't want to catch an eel.).

I can't believe I'm going on about this but here it is. Or cooking, if you're going to cook an eggplant you usually know something about how eggplants act when salted or steamed or grilled or fried and so on. Ha. I almost feel as if I'm avoiding talking about poetry. The way one can avoid talking overtly about something via parable or analogy.

Do you like to make any kind of use of analogies, parables, fables, tales, etc.?

I don't think it would be accurate to say *I fish*, but I *have* fished. My dad taught me to fish when I was younger. He still has fishing gear, though I don't know when the last time was that he used it. My family is Jamaican and there's a lot of fishing in Jamaica, and I guess that's something (maybe one of the few things) that Jamaica has in common with Portland, Oregon, where I grew up. I remember being very proud of catching eight fish once as

a kid in Jamaica, but I later learned it was some sort of pre-stocked fishing pond. So you know, that really takes some of the sense of accomplishment out of it. But yes, in terms of this particular analogy, I suppose the clear intention here, what I'm fishing for, would be simply to write a poem.

I've never really put much thought toward analogy, parable, fable and the like, but I actually I do rely on them a bit. I think there are some elements of parable or fable in some of the poems in *Incorrect Merciful Impulses*. I appreciate the opportunity that fable can present to take something familiar—a narrative or even just a narrative structure—and knock it off center, distort it just enough to make it a little uncomfortable or alarming. Like Freud's *unheimlich*, a concept that's always intrigued me.

Jean Giono, who wrote *Joy of Man's Desiring*, is said to have said:

"Have you ever seen a seaport?"

"No."

"So much the better. When you see you no longer imagine."

This seems almost ridiculously one-dimensional considering what's being said. Though I get a little of why someone might say it.

For instance, that beautiful poem, at least it's an all time favorite of mine, is John Ashbery's "The Instruction Manual"—it can be said to enact something related to Giono's idea. The clerk who isn't in Guadalajara begins to imagine being in Guadalajara and that saves his life, for the time being anyway. He maybe imagines Guadalajara better than if he were in fact seeing it in the flesh.

Maybe when one has to imagine something so much is at stake one has to be careful to imagine it well, carefully and so on

"Not for lack of desire to give those
answers, but for lack of answers"

A brief malfunction = flicker of feeling
soon gone.

"circle of care"

earnest misanthropy compassion

you ~~the~~ shift out of the frame
the feeling sparks
sparks & shifts

What a mess I've made of this
emotion.

unreliable

~~and~~ a light reflecting in
a fuzzy horizon.
A spring perennial. oh everyone knows.

"common human project" - Martha Nussbaum

What roles do “seeing” and “imagining”—given the strange and complicated ways we can take these words—have in your work? Is there an emphasis, and exchange, is one not so different from the other? Or are they very different? Or can their differences be useful to a writer?

This is such a complex question because it gets at these ideas of what is true, and what is certain, versus what is only perceived, and I think those issues are very present in my work, especially in this book. Privileging imagination over truth strikes me as potentially oppressive—there are things that are true, things that have happened, no matter how we may like to imagine them away.

But imagination, the act of forming an idea of something that is not present in one’s immediate experience, also brings with it the potential for a greater comprehension of lives and spheres beyond our own.

I suppose what seems dangerous in what you’ve quoted from Giono is the way it pits one way of seeing against the other, when both are valuable, and neither should be eschewed in the pursuit of understanding ourselves and each other and the world around us. And it’s also dangerous to mistake imagination for truth, or replace one with the other. In some cases, that can be deadly. It brings to mind Claudia Rankine’s words: “Because white men can’t/ police their imagination/ black men are dying.”

What anyone does with their imaginations definitely is not going to be intrinsically good or positive. People imagine horrific things. Even in just day to day getting by ways, an act of imagination might lead anyone to think something ridiculously shameful, or hurtful or murderous, and definitely historically, in fact, the bleakest most damning human acts were dreamed up by someone. As you suggest, becoming familiar with how imagination and truth can be differently understood or taken, that’s a matter that will be a matter of life and death.

Absolutely. And I think imagination can be a life-giving thing, too. It's a powerful force, more so than we always realize.

And yes, there's a real danger in pitting one way of thinking against another. Your sense of the dangers of any kind of binary impositions, that's a true caution one can hope to keep in mind. Poets tend to not like binaries, too cut and dry, too limited by what.....some kind of thinking that doesn't leave room to move, or to understand.

You end your new book with a forceful poem, "We," a poem directly calling to our attention what might be understood as binary but by poetry's alchemical charge it breaks the poem's contents out of any kind of such limits. The poem starts out:

We

have been the buyer, the bought
the boy's blood in the dirt

have been woman in winter
the knife of her hunger

have been the knife at her throat

have ravaged and burned, been burned

This poem has the effect of breaking up that famous sea of ice within us with that renowned axe of poetry.

Ending your book with that poem feels as if we've arrived at an absolutely sure conclusion—for now.

I don't mean it seems to end forever.

Did the book ever end any other way?

It never did! I wrote this poem while on a residency at The MacDowell Colony, where I went to finish the manuscript. Once the poem was done, I knew it was meant to be the final poem in the book. The collection spends a lot of time contemplating the other, grappling with a sense of displacement and alienation, so with the ending I wanted to step back and look at what joins us. In this poem, we're not just one thing or another, we are several things, and we're here as a result of all the violent, intertwined histories that have led to this moment.

Several poems in the book have “symptoms” and “still life” in them. It feels right to me how you take something that has a pretty ordinary clear meaning or use in our day to day life with language—a symptom of an illness, say—but because it’s in poetry and because you combine it with intense things—Home, Doctrine, Aftermath, Sympathy, Prophecy, to name a few—“symptom” comes to take up an incantatory note.

Same with “still life.” Your use of it has a way of transfixing what follows it: Spurious Picturesque, Mechanical, Copernicus & Hypnophobia, for instance—they are shocked a little into a new frame. And “still life” has, I think, I’m not sure about this, but it feels like it might be so, always hinted at an undercurrent of something that’s resisted or withstood “well, it’s still life.”

Which doesn’t take away from that voice any purpose of judgment.

I like that interpretation of still life! It's a fitting double entendre, especially for these poems, because they all feel a bit frustrated or bewildered by what life is. Defeated, even. But they keep going. The symptoms poems puzzled me a bit at first, but I kept writing them. I was interested in the sense of wrongness they conveyed. It's as if the speaker can't quite do living the way they're supposed to, and their failure must be pathologized and diagnosed.

Your beautiful poem “Symptoms of Doctrine” is careful to distinguish between, among—to distinguish... It’s careful about how we think and how we say things. It begins this way:

In all my stories, nothing keeps
happening over and over.
I would speak of what I know,

but what I know is nothing, except nothing
is certain. I am just trying to be
honest. Like the door and its squeak.

Is that honesty?
In all your photographs your mouth
reminds me of my mouth, and everything

happens without me. I have been othered away

As you’ve written poetry and prose for some time, what are the things you think have been most significant to you as you’ve taken up something, discarded something, become aware of something, discovered something, rejected something and so on—

I suppose I’ve gotten to the point where I’m becoming less and less guided or troubled by any idea of what I should be writing. So what’s significant may change from poem to poem, but I allow myself to go where I please. I do want each poem to be significant, though. At least to me. It’s important to me to ask *why* of each poem I write: Why this poem? What does it mean to me? What does it have to say?

at 28 he began to
experience difficulties w/
reality.

^{mental patient}
anonymously" carved self portrait
from a fallen apple tree
encave chest from sb.

"We never did figure out
what went wrong"

"clothes fear my extinction"
→ wtf is this??

When my nerves want last

Injury Pattern(s)

In war, most injuries
are open
something penetrates the skin & breaks
the bone
(the bone doesn't break) ^{not} in two
but (is) fragmented, with segments
missing

- the story of skin is two stories:
- ① trying to save a life & close
the skin rapidly
 - ② trying to regenerate high quality skin
for essential & functional body
parts
like the face

all of the wounded have earned
our respect.

Shelter -

Check the light - this is as good
a place as any to make a home
for the night.

Seek shelter - there's a storm
coming like no one's seen

Has how you read changed over the years?

I read fewer novels these days—far fewer than I’d like to be reading. I tend to read more nonfiction, more articles, more poetry. And I’m a bit more scattered about my pursuits, in a way that’s also quite intentional. I’ve become a seeking sort of reader. I’ll become interested in a certain idea and find a text that engages in it, or I’ll hear about a work that engages in an idea that appeals to me, and I’ll read some but maybe not all of it—just enough to spark something in me.

I don’t tend to read something cover to cover unless it really holds my attention and I’m completely engrossed. I think because I have to read a lot just to keep up with the culture I’m living in, and for my teaching work, I don’t want to waste time on anything that’s not feeding me.

Would you name some writers, poets, essayists, artists, anyone who feeds your thinking? You mention keeping up “with the culture.” Anyone or anything you find useful will be of interest to your readers.

Keeping up with the culture (I mean popular culture, politics, books, literary chatter) is sort of an impossible endeavor, but I try anyway. It’s always hard for me to pin down the things that feed me, because there’s so much, and I’m always taking in.

This book was fed by movies and television, by Nietzsche, by NPR, the New York Times, Naomi Klein, Michelle Alexander, Howard Zinn. And lately I’ve been grazing on Audre Lorde, Lucretius, James Baldwin, Simone de Beauvoir, M. NourbeSe Philip, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Robin Coste Lewis, and a lot of stimulating conversation happening online about identity and equity in literary culture and American culture at large.

“Incorrect Merciful Impulses” is such a great title. It looks as if it could be saying immediately, look, this is what this book is about; and it is, though it’s so much more. It invites anyone to double take or triple take or take a lot of time with each word. Each word so richly implies or suggests so much, and each word in it has ten thousand meanings, contexts, bearings. Do you mind saying how it came about?

The title comes from Jenny Holzer’s “Inflammatory Essays,” a series of text-based art pieces. I encountered them in an exhibit at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and felt an immediate connection and kinship to the voice she employs. They feel a little like manifesto. Or propaganda. They’re alluring and frightening at the same time. When I saw the phrase “INCORRECT MERCIFUL IMPULSES” I immediately thought, that’s my title.

I love that double and triple take it invites, the rich complexities within each word, the way those complexities multiply as the words interact with each other. There’s the notion of an impulse, a sort of basic urge or instinct, being wrong—and according to whom?

According to what metric? Then there’s mercy, which implies compassion, but also contains an implicit imbalance of power. These were all ideas I’d been working through as I wrote these poems.

And what about new work? What’s most on your writing mind these days?

I’ve been thinking a lot about the nature of existence. What else? At the moment, it’s the tension between the interior life and the reality of the physical form moving through the world. We have these bodies that mean things to people, and we don’t have a lot of control over what they mean. So there are all these unintended messages being received by those around us just by our physical presence. That frustrates me, and fascinates me.

How does our interior self react to or relate to the identities we are assigned by the world around us? What is generated by the gaps between what's expected of us and what we are? This where my mind has been lately, and that's the territory my poems are exploring.

Thank you, Camille, we'll be looking forward to your new poems.

DEAR KATIE

Emily Skaja

Understand I need these fragments. To tell it once is not enough.

I have a hundred holy objects, everything looked upon, to break.

Time will pass, time will pass me, attaching mile marker threats

to every causeway. I know it's useless. I put on every eyeliner I own.

I draw the shape—a different eye to see this. I map the innocent

spill of color to my ear. Look, I'm already half an emerald. Lit & limited, I'm

cut. Now that I can't unsmudge the lines for any reason, I am difficult.

He takes the high road; I take the thornhedge.

Katie, I can't find a way to talk about this

but it always happens: I have no standing with the men in my life.

You are the only one who ever asks me, *Are you eating?*

Come close, too close, get out—it's a blunt-edged system

& when did I begin to choose this type of man who loves to "protect" me
from himself? Lately, I hold your name in my mouth

like a talisman because we are never afraid of the same things.

Remember the dead dog we found on the bridge road. *A coyote*, I said.

Raised as I was near a cemetery, I always assume some authority

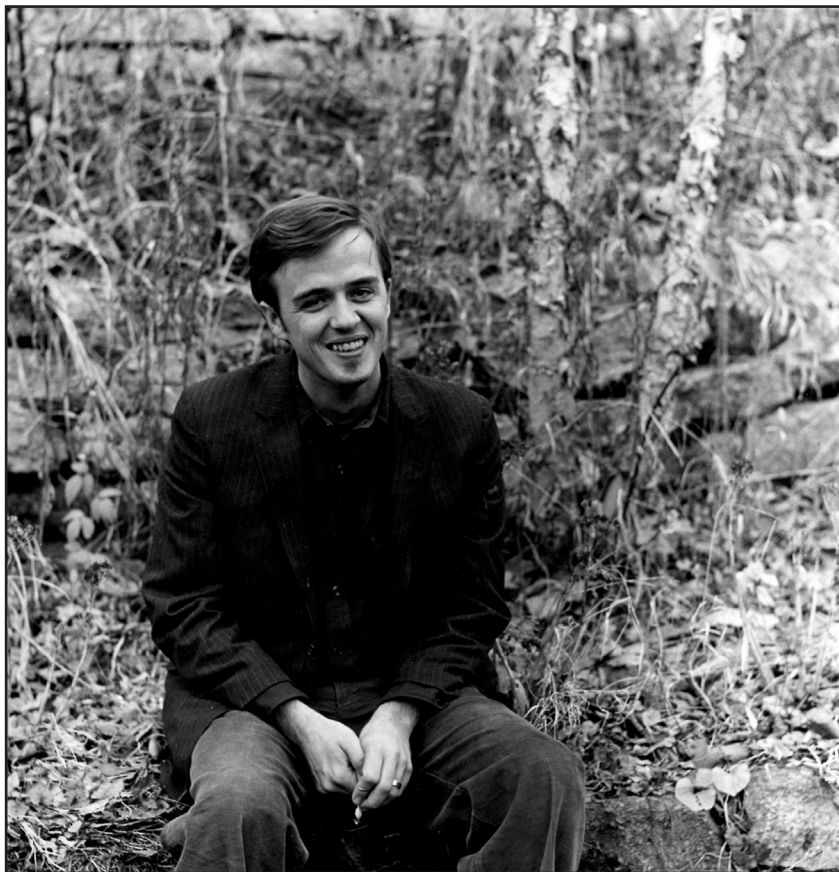
over the departed. Stray magic. Lies about the natural world
comfort me, I admit. Like if a tree feels something
when another tree is fucking up her life. I believe in patterns. Shapes.
Pinnate, whorled. I remember too the accordion doors of the Blue Line train
& the way it spit me out piss-drunk on the O'Hare platform crying
because I wasn't sure if I'd hit him or if I'd only wanted to.

I was trying to starve myself out of a feeling. Signals & timelines.
*& if the train comes out of the tunnel before I count to ten
then I'm not the most fucked thing. & if not, then When.*

My own mouth bleeding is a nice round number.

On your couch I fall asleep with puke in my hair & I dream
that I'm trapped in a water tower. *Katie*, I wake up saying.

JAMES TATE



Photograph by Helly Wright

PHOTOGRAPHS OF OBJECTS AT JAMES TATE'S HOUSE

by Michael Medeiros



THE FLOORPLAN TO HEAVEN

James Tate

I was asleep on my desk when the boss walked in. I woke immediately and said, "I was just looking for a paperclip that seemed to escape here." "Who cares about a paperclip? I know I don't." "I was just thinking about the money. Paperclips cost plenty and I thought it might save the company," I said. "Paperclips cost nothing and I'm paying you a good salary to build shopping malls. Now let's stop this nonsense. Get to work now," he said, and left in a huff. I sat up straight and tried to remember what I was supposed to do. Oh, yes, Macy's. The floorplan. After work I was going to meet Eleanor for a drink at Lefty's. Eleanor was beautiful and smart. Maybe afterwards we could go to my place. Another drink and then some dinner. I could cook up my special pasta. Some music. And then to bed. That would be lovely. But she's not that kind of girl. It's only our second date. Be happy with that. Maybe talk about opera, not baseball. But I don't know anything about opera. Maybe she likes baseball or boxing. You never know with a girl like that. The boss said, "Larry, are you almost through?" "Oh, yes, just give me a few more minutes," I said. I hate this job. I really do. It's impossible to carry on a straight line of thinking without some interruption. Maybe I could get a job in a lighthouse, look for submarines all day. Macy's. What do I care about Macy's. And, yet, my life depends on it. I can't even remember what it is I am supposed to do. Deconstruct the Parthenon. Make the Acropolis out of Lincoln logs. Make Eleanor out of fire.







THE SKY IS FALLING LIKE BUNNIES

Oliver sat in his chair like milk in a bottle. No, that isn't right. Oliver sat in his chair like a stick in mud. That's not it. Oliver sat in his chair like air in the mouth. That couldn't be right. Oliver sat in his chair like poison in a sandwich. Nope. Oliver sat in his chair like a man on a horse. Not quite. Oliver sat in his chair like a man in a mudhole. Oliver sat in his chair like a pixie on a rosebud. I think that might be it. He bent over and picked up his pencil. Then he started to write. He wrote in a big circle all around the paper, then smaller and smaller until it was just a dot. Then he stared at the dot for a long time until he nearly fell out of the chair. He decided that was a bad idea and stopped it. He wadded the paper up and threw it in the wastebasket. Actually, he missed the basket. Oh well, he never was much good at basketball. In high school, he failed to make the team. He looked out the window. It was snowing. In fact, it had been snowing hard for hours. No one was plowing. The streets and his driveway had what appeared to be a foot of snow. Oliver felt paralyzed, he couldn't move. A bunny jumped over his head. Then Beth came into the room. "What are you doing here?" she said. "Just sitting," Oliver said. "What do you mean 'just sitting?'" she said. "That's what I'm doing, just sitting," he said. "I've never heard of anybody 'just sitting.' You must be doing something else, like watching the stars fall or the garbage truck coming up the street or a rattlesnake getting ready to strike, I mean, isn't there anything else in your picture?" she said. "Not really," he said. "Well, maybe you're dead, did you ever think of that?" she said. "I don't think so," he said. "Can you get out of that chair?" she said. "I don't know. I seem to like it here," he said. "You don't look like you do. You look like you're miserable," she said. "I'm just trying to figure out how that bunny got into the house," he said. "What bunny? I don't see any bunny," she said. "One jumped over my head a few minutes ago," he said. "I don't believe you. You're crazy," she said. "No, I'm telling you the truth," he said. "Sitting in one place too long causes you to hallucinate, that's a proven fact," she said. "Ask the bunny about that," Oliver said. "There

is no bunny,” Beth said. “Just as there is no Oliver and no Beth,” he said. “Now you’re getting metaphysical on me,” she said. “I’d like to, but I’m too tired,” he said. “Wake up! The sky is falling!” she said. “That’s not the sky, that’s just a bunny I once knew,” he said.









THE PRAIRIE DOG TOWN UNDER ATTACK

Hereafter the little dogs of the prairie shall be known as Peter and Bob. Oh, and Martha and Anne. And then there was the little one, Larry, and Katie and Artie and Frank and Jamie and Barbara. I'm sure there were more. They moved around so fast it was hard to tell. Anyway, Bob was out scouting for food one day when he met a wolf. They started talking about food when the wolf suddenly looked at Bob and said, "You would make a good snack for me, you know that?" "Oh, no, I taste like poison. You wouldn't want to eat me," Bob said. "I've had one before. You don't taste like poison. As I recall you were delicious," said the wolf. "You must be thinking of my nephews. I know they taste good, but my tribe tastes terrible and will kill you," Bob said. "Well, let me just try a leg, we'll see then," he said. Martha walked up and said, "What's the matter?" "This wolf wants to eat my leg. I told him it would kill him," Bob said. Peter and Frank walked up, and Peter said, "What's the matter?" Bob said, "This wolf wants to eat me, but I told him we were poison." "Oh, yes, it's a proven fact. Scientists have said it's so," Peter said. "Just a bite won't kill me. Come on, don't be afraid," the wolf said. Katie walked up and bit the wolf's leg. "Ouch," the wolf said, "that hurt." "See what I mean, and you aren't even poison," Peter said. The wolf reached and grabbed Katie and gobbled her down. "We'll see who's poison," he said. The prairie dogs all gathered together. "You're going to die," Peter shouted at the wolf. "We'll see about that," said the wolf. The prairie dogs all charged the wolf and started snapping at any part of him they could get at. The wolf jumped and twisted in the air and screeched. They wouldn't stop. The wolf reached out and grabbed Bob and

swallowed him whole. Peter backed off and cried for a few minutes. Bob was his best friend. But then he built up steam and charged the wolf and jumped and bit him on the nose. The wolf cried and backed off. He coughed and hacked and eventually he threw up Katie and Bob. They were alright and ran to join Peter and the others. The wolf had had enough and turned and ran away. The prairie dogs were so happy they didn't know what to do. "Man, it was dark and grisly inside that wolf," Bob said. "I rather liked it in there. It reminded me of before I was born," Katie said. "I'm just glad to have you both back. It wasn't the same without you," Peter said.



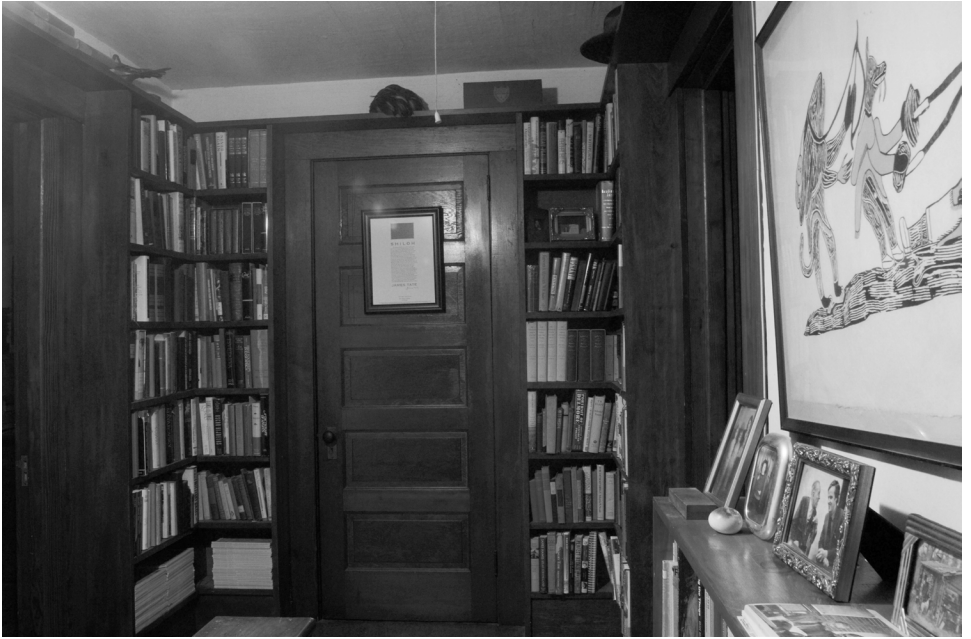


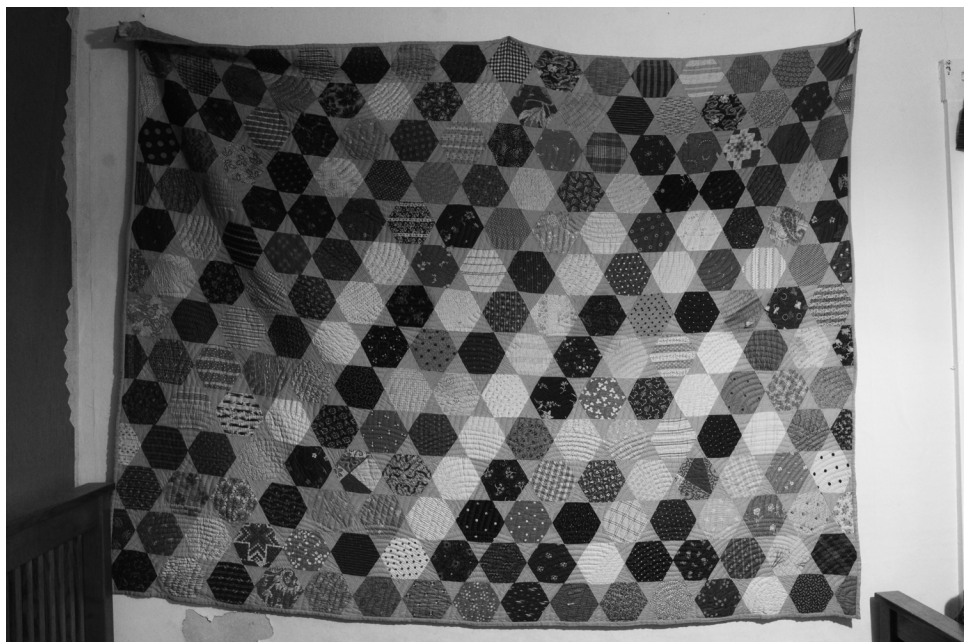














ARS POETICA BATTLE RHYME FOR SUCKER EMCEES

Marcus Wicker

after Adrian Matejka

Who shall not be named.
Who shall not be coveted
beyond whatever
well-mannered Hot 100-
UK List. (You pick.)
Who, keep it real, may not
even exist after this
riff, after this rift. Who,
you may not even claim
ten years from this
line when finally the mic
splits from his mitts—
Check it: anyone can strum
da DUM da DUM (no SHIT)
on a ceremonial lute.
Even a classically trained
orangutan, though
most of you be absolutely
abecedarian. Parakeets:
Dactyls. Basic
Bitches, Simpleton Sarah's
& disco loops. Yo!
you gave up on the moon
for a tweed suit &
elbow patches.
Does your heart also
beat watch-slow,

in perfectly fixed
patterns? Does your stroke
not stroke? Poor you.

Who me?

I be your organic turkey
on steroids. LL—

straight swole, & *hard*
as hell. Bigger. Blacker.

Deafer, you are auto-
tune & I've already
pressed mute.

I be the Anti-wack

ODB. Big Baby Jesus,

Osiris. Bet your wife
might like it. The anti-

virus to your metrics,

felxin'. Got mine honest.

God-given. Got yours, too.

MATERIALIST MATINS

from *Cul-de-sac Pastoral*

The view, Lord, can I still sit next to you
if it's obscured by an ark's clumsy dark

cloaked in pitch, & I am all of it, Sire,
three of every shrine? Rag top triple black

Cadillac, plus the lease (which is the leash).
Golden calf swung low from Cuban Links. Dark

idolatry: the boardroom brogues buffed just
brighter than the CEO's. Keep these black

as dusk in me, where I'll till history
until delinquent cotton blessings, black

gold flowing backwards, & Whig tax codes work
for me, too. Make me visible as you

in Birkenstocks. With Hells Angels Hair. Dark
as slavery: black magic-almighty.

GENESIS

Naima Woods

I are all teeth all shinywhite all bloodgummed
and swollen // I are no braced not creamy with fur

Remember how daddy said *birfday* // The careful lush
of that word and then his lips would pull back

Look: is your mouth born // your mouth wet birth
or sulphur egg filled to nest // is your palate the only meat in there

Eat at your black eat fingernails // eat the way
daddy used to say *birf* with pulpy spit and all that porcelain

His mouth was wide and had all the language // I were born
from that mouth and unborn // I were wombed there

Birf was promise and threat // remember how daddy
made his mouth parch how he took back that wet word

I are dry I are thick in saliva // So desert so wilds
in dryness // I are not given the word // I are not delivered

PALINODE

Monica Youn

1.

a bird / falls off / a balcony / panicked grasping / fistfuls of / air

2.

I was wrong

please I was

wrong please I

wanted nothing please

I don't want

PORTRAIT OF A HANGED MAN

unremembered
all those years sealed

in the desiccating
chamber what

once fed us once
flooded us now

shrunk to a stark
architecture

sweet segments
shriveled away

from the exposed
core like a dry stalk

like a stretched neck
ending in that lipless

rictus that almost
unwilling first gasp

fixed in recollection
as if cast in liquid

glass that poured
into you that first time

you let your mouth
fall open that first

second you let
yourself go slack

THE HANGED MEN REPRISE

1.

a blunted / hook beneath / the breastbone / as if / someone yanked /
out a / strip of / you a / great inrush / of cold / night and /
taillights and / the avenue

2.

the nerves / frenzy feeding / on nothing

3.

I knew / god to / be absolute / zero all / movement slowing /
coming to / a stop

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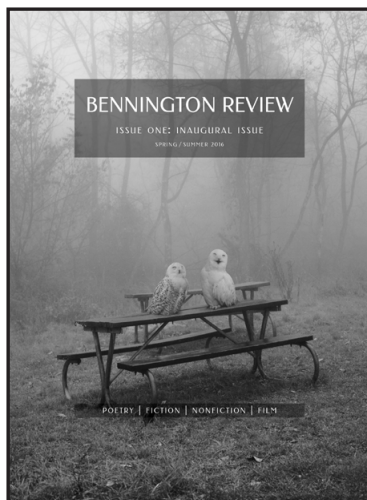
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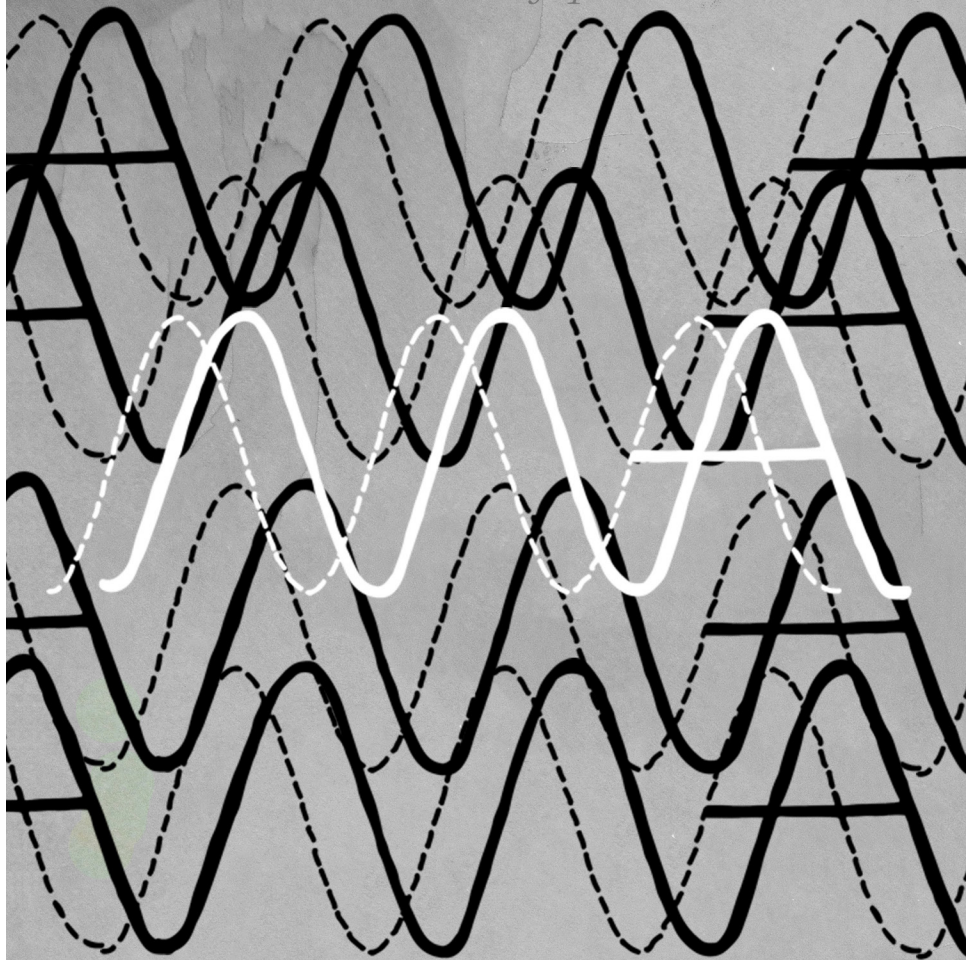


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